

NEWS RELEASE

Tochak McGrath Discovery

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**ANCIENT HUMAN REMAINS DISCOVERED ON THE UPPER KUSKOKWIM RIVER
Tochak McGrath Discovery**

McGrath, Alaska (November 6, 2012) – A recent discovery in McGrath has the village buzzing with intrigue about their past. In early October, construction activity relating to a long-awaited erosion control project exposed ancient human remains.

The local Athabascan name “Tochak McGrath Discovery” refers to the confluence of the Takotna and Kuskokwim rivers at the village of McGrath. Found were the remains of three individual males, a fully-grown adult, a young adult, and a child.

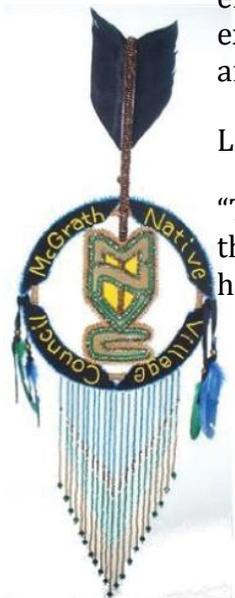
“This is a phenomenal find for all Alaska Native people,” says Vicki Otte CEO of MTNT, the local village corporation and landowner of the lot on which the remains were unearthed. “We are all looking forward to further exploration in the area as it appears these people lived a true subsistence lifestyle, something we have been fighting to restore for years.”

Following earth moving activities, a construction worker recognized an unusual feature in the exposed ground that was determined to be a human skull. All construction activities ceased and the find led to a criminal investigation to determine the nature of the find.

Under state law, the discovery of human remains requires notification of law enforcement to determine whether the find is of criminal interest. Subsequent exhumation revealed the skeletal material was associated with prehistoric stone artifacts. The absence of modern trade goods indicated the site was old.

Local Tribal officials immediately understood the significance of this discovery.

“These remains appear to be from long before the Russian fur traders migrated into the area,” stated Betty Magnuson, First Chief of McGrath Village Council. “We are happy to be working with Tanana Chiefs Conference archeologists to learn more.”



Tribal officials have expressed interest to explore scientific analysis to understand earlier life-ways in their area.

Archaeologists from Tanana Chiefs Conference, the regional non-profit corporation, conducted further examination of the discovery site and found charcoal in frozen blocks of soil dislodged during removal by law enforcement officials. The frozen sediment contained a distinctive layer of wood ash from a hearth situated above one of the skeletons.

The charcoal provided a radiocarbon age of between 1470 and 1650 A.D., and the remains may be older since they were located below the hearth feature. Tribal officials and scientists are working together to obtain a radiocarbon date directly on the bone that should provide a definitive age on these early Alaskans.

The Native leadership is working with federal and state officials and scientists to study and preserve the remains and learn more about their ancestors. A reburial and ceremony is planned for the final disposition of the deceased.

“We look forward to providing a proper burial and celebration our ancestors, upon conclusion of this study,” says Otte.

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